A Brief History of the Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival

In 1998, Robin Miller gathered a production team to develop and present an LGBT film festival in Colorado Springs. Unfortunately, that first festival was cancelled due to the lack of a venue. But, in 1999, **Alma Cremonesi**, with the encouragement of Susan Swern, formed a new production team, and began what has now become the annual **Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival**, so named by Paul Weeks. Weeks was a jack-of-all-trades with regard to that first Festival…including designing and printing that initial program. Local artist, Dennis Lujan designed the Festival's first poster, which also became the cover of the Festival program. Although Dennis has since moved to New Mexico, he submitted the artwork for the seventh year, and designed a beautiful poster for the Festival. Susan Swern, Robin Miller, and Paul Weeks have also moved out of the Colorado Springs area, and are missed.

Alma continued the Festival after that first year. She had extensive experience with the San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival, working on that event for the entire decade of the 1970s. She was also active with the U.S. Environmental Film Festival, which had its beginning here in Colorado Springs in the early 1990s. From those experiences, Alma learned a great deal about keeping festivals alive. She has served as PPLFF president for eight years, and is now its executive director. A new board, chaired by Paul Forsett, is in place to continue moving the Festival forward in the coming years.

In the 1990s, Colorado Springs had become notorious for its gay bashing, and for being the city that originated the anti-gay Amendment 2. To counteract this perception, Festival organizers called on their deep roots in this city, and engendered enthusiastic support for the Festival. An early Festival supporter was the Gill Foundation, which has provided financial assistance for eight years. The Bee Vradenburg Foundation for the Arts has also been a supporter for the past four years.

Delaney Utterback, station manager at KRCC-FM, coordinated the Festival's graphic designs creating both posters and beautiful program covers for Festivals 2 thru 4. The second Festival saw an encouraging event with the screening of John Cameron Mitchell's film "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" which played to a packed house…a coup for the Festival, as we were able to screen it prior to its national release. Mitchell had lived in Colorado Springs before moving to New York, and becoming a well-known actor/director.

The beginning of the third Festival was marked by a tragic event, that of the murder of Joycelyn Sandberg who had joined the Festival board after the second year. This event threw other members into a fog, but the Festival moved forward. Each succeeding Festival has had its own challenges, as well as successes, but has weathered all storms.

We have now held **eight Festivals** at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, and are looking forward to the 9th. PPLFF prides itself on presenting the best shorts and features screened at the San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival. We are also the only LGBT film festival in Colorado at present. We have a long list of faithful sponsors, including churches and civic organizations to thank along with the many, many returning attendees. Through their and your support, we have created and built a vibrant community here in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. **THANK YOU**! And, we hope to see you at the 9th Annual Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival.